

SECRET

TURKEY AND THE POPPY PROBLEM

Pressures are mounting within Turkey for resumption of poppy cultivation. The government has recently permitted state farms to plant poppies to insure that adequate seed would be on hand to allow a crop to be sowed in the fall, if a decision to go ahead is given. The newly installed government headed by Bulent Ecevit has already notified Washington that it has begun to review the previous ban on poppy planting. This is the way the problem looks to Turkish officials:

The Turks agreed to stop poppy cultivation under strong US pressures and inducements in 1971. They promulgated a decree banning poppy planting, but did not commit themselves by treaty to this course. Legally in Turkey, therefore, the government could again authorize poppy cultivation through the decree issued annually on this subject at the end of June. There is no general law banning poppy planting, and the government would not need a new grant of authority to proceed.

The decision to ban poppy cultivation was never politically popular in Turkey. It was made by a military-backed

SECRET

"above-party" government which was not subject to normal considerations of partisan politics. Since 1971 deputies from the major parties have periodically introduced bills calling for a resumption of poppy planting. In the abnormal atmosphere which prevailed in the past few years in Turkey, these bills were never enacted. But almost all party platforms for the 1973 elections called for concessions to poppy growers. And this stood as one of the few issues in Turkey on which a general consensus obtained. The degree of consensus has been underlined since the 1973 elections by statements from the major party leaders favoring a resumption of controlled poppy growing.

The peasants of the traditional poppy growing areas are particularly important in the delicate party balance in Turkey. The Republican Peoples Party enjoyed a slight lead in popular support in the last elections, gaining 33 percent of the vote to some 29 percent for the Justice Party, its closest rival. While these votes produced a somewhat greater plurality of seats in parliament, the Republican Peoples Party depends on a coalition with the much smaller National Salvation Party to remain in office. If this precarious cooperation should break down, there is a good chance that early elections would be necessary. All parties wish to be prepared for this

SECRET

eventuality. And the incentive to pander to the maximum popular support means that all parties are avidly courting the votes of the poppy producers.

Momentum to resume cultivation has also grown because the original case for prohibiting the poppy appears to many Turks to have worn thin over time. The rationale for imposing the ban in 1971 rested on the heavy contribution that illegally produced Turkish opium made to the production of heroin introduced into the US. The argument that 80 percent of US heroin came from Turkish poppies raised the expectation in Turkey that if opium production were halted, the US drug problem would be solved. Now, however, many Turks have come to reassess their endorsement of the poppy ban, for they do not believe that the elimination of poppy production in Turkey has seriously reduced drug abuse in the US.

In addition, those who all along had opposed the ban on poppy cultivation had argued that Turkish restraint would only open the legitimate market to others. The fact that Washington is now encouraging India to produce more opium strengthens this argument. The Turkish leaders are aware of this development, which they find particularly galling,

SECRET

inasmuch as Turkey has at least since the 1940s argued that cultivation be restricted to those countries which were traditional producers and that their share of the legal market be guaranteed in all measures to restrict production.

Further, there has been considerable dissatisfaction in Turkey over the amount of compensation offered by the US as an inducement to Ankara to stop poppy growing. A number of Turkish politicians have claimed the economic loss to the peasant cultivators to run over \$100 million. The figure of \$35 million for US aid to the poppy growers has thus been criticized as seriously inadequate. And this dissatisfaction has been increased by the fact that US aid was hedged with restrictions that have meant that a substantial proportion of the \$35 million still remains unspent. Many regard this situation as confirmation of their suspicion that the US had little interest in the program once the ban began.

Finally, in Turkey the belief is gaining ground that the problem of poppy production no longer seems as immediate and large to the US as it did in 1971. Some Turks suspect that the US would not see resumption of poppy production as a major breach of faith. The Turkish government has communicated its interest in resuming production and so far the roof has not

SECRET

fallen in. Ecevit and his colleagues are still probing on this point, and are digesting the American reaction. But all the while momentum is increasing toward a decision to permit cultivation again. And they have not yet been disabused of their judgment that the US will not seriously punish Turkey for resumption if under stringent controls.

Given these factors, it will not be easy to reverse the strong tide toward renewed cultivation. The Prime Minister himself is not personally committed to restoring poppy cultivation, however; he might therefore still be open to a solution that met Turkey's economic needs and his own political requirements. But he feels weak and is looking for cheap victories to offset the unpopular steps--price rises--he has been obliged to grant. Unless he is made to recognize that opium production is not a cheap victory, there is scant chance he would oppose ending the ban. He would find an offer of economic aid--grant, not loans--a useful argument against his critics, if he were for other reasons to reverse his field. But money alone would not be sufficient inducement to change course. And in any event he would not want to seem to have sold out to the Americans.

25X1A

Approved For Release 2002/05/07 : CIA-RDP85T00353R000100030004-9

Approved For Release 2002/05/07 : CIA-RDP85T00353R000100030004-9